

A Midrash of Worker Positions

To Achieve A Just Society We Advocate:

A complete rejection of the present social order and a nonviolent revolution to establish an order more in accord with Christian values. This can only be done by direct action, since political means have failed as a method for bringing about this society. Therefore, we advocate a personalism which takes on ourselves responsibility for changing conditions to the extent that we are able to do so. By establishing Houses of Hospitality we take care of as many of those in need as we can rather than turn them over to the impersonal "charity" of the State. We do not do this in order to patch up the wrecks of the capitalist system but rather because there is always a shared responsibility in these things and the call to minister to our brother/sister transcends any consideration of economics. We feel that what anyone possesses beyond basic needs does not belong to one's self but rather to the poor who are without it.

We believe in a withdrawal from the capitalist system so far as each one is able to do so. Toward this end we favor the establishment of a Distributist economy wherein those who have a vocation to the land will work on the farms surrounding the village and those who have other vocations will work in the village itself. In this way we will have a decentralized economy which will dispense with the State as we know it and will be federationist in character as was society during certain periods that preceded the rise of national states.

We believe in worker-ownership of the means of production and distribution, as distinguished from nationalization. This to be accomplished by decentralized co-operatives and the elimination of a distinct employer class. It is revolution from below and not (as political revolutions are) from above. It calls for widespread and universal ownership of property by all people as a stepping stone to a communism that will be in accord with the Christian teaching of detachment from material goods and which, when realized, will express itself in common ownership. "Property, the more common it is, the more holy it is," St. Gertrude writes.

We believe in the complete equality of all men and women under God. Oppression in any form is blasphemy against God, Who created all persons in His image and who offers redemption to all. The person comes to God freely or not at all and it is not the function of any person or institution to force the Faith on anyone. Persecution of any people is therefore a serious sin and denial of free will.

We believe further that the revolution that is to be pursued in ourselves and in society must be pacifist. Otherwise it will proceed by force and use means that are evil and which will never be outgrown, so that they will determine the END of the revolution and that end will again be tyranny. We believe that Christ went beyond natural ethics and the Old Dispensation in this matter of force and war and taught nonviolence as a way of life. So that, when we fight tyranny and injustice and the class war, we must do so by spiritual weapons and by non-cooperation. Refusal to pay taxes, refusal to register for conscription, refusal to take part in civil-defense drills, nonviolent strikes, and boycotts, withdrawal from the system are all methods that can be employed in this struggle for justice.

We believe that success, as the world determines it, is not the criterion by which a movement should be judged. We must be prepared and ready to face seeming failure. The most important thing is that we adhere to these values which transcend time and for which we will be asked a personal accounting, not as to whether they succeeded (though we should hope that they do) but as to whether we remained true to them even though the whole world go otherwise.

part 2

Via pacis
(the way
of peace)
Des Moines
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B-1 Bomber Activities

The B-1 Bomber, under consideration for funding by President Carter, would create "a public works project for the aerospace industry rather than a needed weapon for the defense of the United States," according to Senator William Proxmire. The cost of the program is estimated at \$ 92 billion--more than \$1,800 for each American family.

This expenditure would deepen the economic crisis, since military spending is one of the main causes of inflation, according to Clergy and Laity Concerned. And, in the age of nuclear weapons, manned bombers are strategically obsolete.

We feel the B-1 bomber is a symbol of legalized slaughter of human life and we cannot support it. We ask those who are able to join with us in a three day fast from the evening meal on January 17th to the evening meal on January 20th. This fast is a personal atonement for our denial of life through actions by the military.

We are also participating in a vigil in front of the Federal Building at noon, January 21, to "vote with our feet" our disapproval of the B-1 bomber and present our hopes that Mr. Carter will support life sustaining projects. Please join us.

Winter Discussions

Part of the Catholic Worker tradition is the "round table discussion" where people join together to verbalize and clarify thoughts. Mass is celebrated every Friday at the house (713 Indiana, one block north of University between 7th and 8th) at 8 p.m., followed by a discussion.

Jan. 14: Non-Violent Reform in India; a recent immigrant speaks from her personal experience.

Jan. 21: From the B-1 to Life; Dan Clark of the Iowa Peace Network will lead the discussion and present an American Friends Services Committee slide show.

Jan. 28: Traditional Irish Folk Songs; Sr. Eve Kavanaugh shares the music and legends of her homeland.

Feb. 4: Rural Life ; Steve Bossi of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference leads the discussion.

Feb. 11: Hospitality and the Catholic Worker; Frank, Ed and Joe will lead the discussion.

Feb. 18: to be announced.

Feb. 25: Northern Ireland; Margaret Quigley speaks of her experience in a recent visit.

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On Hospitality

It's 10 p.m., the end of another average (what's average?) day at the house. The young'uns are protesting (non-violently, but quite vocally) the early bed time. Bill and Ben are finishing a marathon Hearts championship. My eyes burn, my head throbs, but the pulse is gradually slowing to a calmer, more peaceful rate.

December has proven to be a busy month here. In one week, 20 people spent at least one night with us. These visits came during the Christmas-New Years holidays: Christ was with us in the eyes of children, men and women.



For me the sense of purpose is greater when I can see a body, hear a voice of someone who fell through a hole in the system. Whose check didn't come, or wasn't large enough. Who had no place to go when marital problems arose.

In some warped way, though, we've become established. County welfare workers have visited us and learned that idealism can

be lived. People do help others with no profit motive. Some people actually want to help others at a personal cost, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. And we don't want county or state aid to do it.

This identity, this peculiarity has caused problems for those who try to pidgeon-hole us. Ma Bell still insists that feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and sheltering the homeless is a business, hence our phone is still listed under Frank's name. The commerce commission is debating whether or not we are "peculiar" enough to be listed as Catholic Worker House in the white pages as a residence. (They were invited to visit the house, but the system couldn't handle a hearing outside commission offices. So it goes.)

How can they pidgeon-hole us as a business? How can they, or anyone label us as anything? It has taken Frank 3 issues just to explain (in broken English, no less) the Catholic Worker positions. Our definition, hopefully, will never come.

Our quest has drawn more followers of late. Joanne Hall, who hopes to open a house of hospitality in Dubuque next summer, spent the end of the year with us. She offered much in terms of a new perspective on hospitality, as did the extended visit of another friend, a draft resister, who shared feelings and beliefs on the sanctity of life.

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A Midrash of the Catholic Worker Positions, part 2

The Catholic Worker's critique of our society is not significantly different from any other altruistic humanist existential critique. Many of the proposed Worker actions recommended to change our unjust society have been mirrored in varying degrees by other secular groups.

What the Catholic Worker is and has been for over 40 years is a group of people who have said "Enough! Faceless sin ends with me. I stand alone as a person." This solitude of personal affirmation automatically sets the Worker not in another world, a utopia, but in the very midst and heart of our faceless and impersonal "city of man." The Catholic Worker reaches out to those most bruised and cut and shouted out and hidden in our midst.

Our reaching out to others is not a mute act but a proclamation of Good News, liberating news, news that is reacted against, news that is hard to articulate in flesh, but news that is not our own as much as it is the news of the man Jesus. The difference between the humanist and the Catholic Worker is not in the critique, but in where we get our strength. The Worker movement is a soulful movement. This "soul" is in the Hebraic sense, as an embodied spirit grounded in a this-worldly situation. It is

from this perspective that we should study the Catholic Worker positions, as printed on the cover of this newsletter.

Key words: rejection of the present social order; so clear, cut and dry. What does it mean? In light of the Catholic Worker's critique, rejection of the present social order, a social order that continues to affirm and support an illegitimate status-quo, a social order which has covertly oppressed any threat to the status-quo, and will continue to do so, must be completely and totally rejected. The law of the land, law enforcement, the political structure, the church institutions and even the very school systems that ingrain conformity, all institutions and organizations that feed into stabilizing our present political socio-economic system must be rejected and called to task.

a non-violent revolution; in as much as the present social order must be rejected, it cannot be done violently. Non-violent means are the only real threat to a violent status-quo. Violent means are the easy and faceless means of confronting the social order. A violent response to our present social order is no response at all, but rather a Pavlovian response to a faceless stimulus. Violent means of rejecting the



present social order provide no rejection. One group or ideology may win or lose, but nothing will change.

by direct action since political means have failed; we are so dependent and frightened of freedom that we profess communion with a political system that is incapable

of fellowship. That system demands only allegiance in return for the claim of shelter from freedom's responsibility.

The Catholic Worker professes what the gospel of St. John so artfully conveys in the dramatic trial sequence. Jesus the person stands before Pilate the state, Pilate so desperately trying to get a handle on Jesus. He asks, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus speaks of a kingship, but not one of Pilate's making. Jesus talks of truth and how he is the witness of truth--how Jesus the person is truth. But Pilate and the state ask the most pitiful of all questions: "What is truth?"

The sadness of that question has spilled out in every generation since. When standing face to face, person to person with truth, the state will always be indecisive and its indecisiveness will destroy truth--destroy persons. The Catholic Worker calls for direct action, but not the action of the state.

personalism: Now 40 years have passed in a movement that has never appealed to the masses. Yet, this movement continues to speak and live this simple ideal, not away from the "City of Man" in some sort of sectarian seclusion, but right in the very heart of man's brokenness. It stands with society's most shattered

Individuals must change society at a personal level

human beings and in the midst of all its complexities has made its message authentic.

A truly just society for the individual and the collective must be a personal society carried through consistently in its economic, its social, its spiritual, and its political realms. If structures are too big, if problems are too complex for individuals to decide for themselves, if individuals must relinquish their responsibilities to faceless others in matters that concern their very livelihoods and the livelihoods of other brothers and sisters no matter how far away, then that society is too big and must be broken down. Personalism calls for the person in all of his or her wholeness to take direct action to change society to the extent that they are able to do so: no more and no less and leave the rest to God.

houses of hospitality; one doesn't start reorienting society by finding all "like individuals" and then banding together to find a new promised land. A true revolution creates "the new in the shell of the old."

What better accountability to one's self than being available to the "least in our midst" in houses of hospitality--centers where the rich and the poor come together. The poor come because they have to, the rich because they must and both come naked--no state requirement, no paying

salary, no prescribed degrees or professional position to separate person from persons. This is a true university setting where the students learn more about themselves than they do about others. Houses of hospitality in all shapes and sizes across the whole country serve the needs of the least in what ever form and capacity that a local group comes to enmesh.



what anyone possesses beyond basic needs does not belong to them but rather to the poor who are without it; we have no right to live affluently while others starve. A society that allows for an over-consumption of food and resources by individuals and yet those individuals can do nothing to make available to the poor on a personal level what they have above their basic needs is evil

and impersonal and must be broken down. Those individuals who sense this injustice along with their own powerlessness and are waiting for the system to heal itself (Republicans) or to apply a new program (Democrats) are "blind men leading other blind men." If you are not a bearer of the Good News to the poor, you are not a bearer of the Good News. withdrawal from the capitalist system; what other alternative is there? Our quasi-capitalist, massive centralist economic system is completely incapable of responding in a human manner regardless of anyone's sincere intentions. We are called to disassociate ourselves from this economic system to the extent that we can and move towards a new.

a distributist economy...decentralized economy...federationist in character; the intended direction is clear but incarnating this economy is in no way a simple matter. It truly calls for all the tools available to modern man--mind, body spirit, technology.

This is not a decentralized economy of the past but an actual intended decentralized economy for survival in the future. Economists, such as E.F. Schumacker in his book Small is Beautiful, help to point out the direction that we must go. All types of alternative economic systems have been rooting across our country in the past few years. At the 1976 People's Food Conference in

Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing

Ames, one of the final statements proposed that if it were a priority, every country could feed its own. The Catholic Worker's economic reform is merely re-asserting what many others have already recognized and are applying in a Christ-like answer:

"Wherever genuine human society has since developed, it has always been on this same basis of functional autonomy, mutual recognition and mutual responsibility, whether individual or collective."

--Martin Buber,

Paths of Utopia
a vocation to the land; we have surely lost our sense of integration to mother earth. It seems that the lack of control over our own personhood and our complete dependence on impersonal institutions and organizations is directly related to our distance from the land. Peter Maurin used to say "You grow what you eat and you eat what you grow." Control is a constituent part of any real just society. We have sold our souls to "bigness." "The City of Man" now reaches across the whole land. Much is implied in a vocation to the land. In a truly decentralized regional economy, all will embrace again the holiness of Mother Earth's wisdom. This wisdom leads man to a much needed integration of God--man--creation.
worker-ownership...distinguished from nationalization; though the Catholic Worker is anti-capitalist

it is not pro-communist or pro-socialist. Worker ownership and control in a decentralized regional economy could not function in present day Russia, with its state owned, centrally run businesses. The elite-run state bureaucracy of Russia or any of the European socialist nations has everyone doing his or her prescribed part and Holy Mother the State takes care of them.

The Catholic Worker economy believes in showing the respect and trust to each individual and local community in their autonomy, to decide for themselves. They shouldn't fit into any national or global 5 year plan, but they should be allowed to take care of themselves within their own means and never at the expense of others. "It is a revolution from below and not (as political revolutions are) from above."

universal ownership of property; these are strange words for some americans. This is often understood as communistic or socialistic but it isn't necessarily.

Perhaps the best example in the past of universal ownership in practice can be found in our own American Indians. Truly decentralized economists, the American Indians had a keen sense of the sacredness of creation. In their true wisdom, they never proclaimed private ownership of any of creations gifts and used only what

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they needed. Though there were many tribes, each had its own autonomy and none claimed ownership of any natural resources. Of the resources used, they never used more than was needed for their own basic survival. No local group would feel the need to hoard any natural resources. Each respected the right each other to the land, sea and air, and all things within them, to meet their basic needs. Of course individuals possessed privately those personal belongings that could not be used by another (clothes) or things that an individual would lay claim to, such as a horse. Still, others had an abundance to chose from. Never were basic needs denied to persons and tribes while others lived far beyond their own basic needs. The Catholic Worker calls for a real revival of this truly American tradition of universal ownership. "Property, the more common it is, the more holy it is," according to St. Gertrude.

equality of all men; a response to justice brings a person to the very nerve center of all injustice. True justice is never a one issue problem. One may start at a particular issue but as they pursue their particular issue in hopes for justice, they begin to experience the innate connection of the one reality of injustice with all realities of injustice. The Catholic Worker stands against racism and sexism in what ever

forms it may take.

man comes to God freely; The Catholic Worker stands against any form of persecution of individuals and peoples under any circumstances. Truthful encounters between persons on any level (socially, economically, politically and spiritually) can never be forced or coerced. True freedom allows us to fail as well as succeed.

Christ went beyond natural ethics; we Christians, we Catholics claim Christ as our truth. We claim Christ as our way to truth. Our response to right and wrong, to justice and injustice in light of our faith is different from any natural ethics that have been produced by man and his state. The Catholic Worker's positions are honest responses in light of the Christ, to obvious injustices recognized by all. This response is not passive but active. It is active as all truthful activity must be in a non-violent way.

spiritual weapons; weapons that give a person the strength to do what is right because it is right and not compromise means for the sake of goal.

non-cooperation; action that stems not from a want to be antagonistic, but from the desire to be true to self.

success; Dorothy Day has many times repeated the words of Fr. Zossima of The Brothers Karamazov: "Love in action is a harsh and dreadful thing compared to love

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Adherence to values is most important

in dreams. Love in dreams is greedy for immediate action, rapidly performed and in the sight of all. Men will even give their lives if only the ordeal does not last long but is soon over, with all looking and applauding, as though on the stage. But active love is labour and fortitude, and for some people too, perhaps a complete science. But I predict that just when you see with horror that in spite of all your efforts you are getting further from your goal instead of closer to it--at that very moment you will reach and behold clearly the miraculous power of the Lord who has been all the time loving and mysteriously guiding you."



(continued from p.3)

Contributions have fortunately increased a bit lately. We've reached overcapacity quite often, and need help in preparing for offering more room for hospitality. When the \$3,000 debt remaining on the property is paid, hopefully by the end of spring, we hope to purchase an adjoining property. That house is larger, so perhaps our hospitality won't

Success for the Catholic Worker movement is not the success worshiped in our "City of Man": our GNP or our highest body count. Success such as this is a sham held onto because of fear. The success of the Catholic Worker is one that starts inside an individual. This individual is never totally certain of any idea or thing but attempts to respond to the Christ in all others, the least in all others from the very brokenness that they, the individuals share from within themselves. It is the type of activity that can't be judged by our time, but rather by God's time.

--Frank Cordaro

have to be so temporary, we will have more space for guests and resident staff "yearning to be free", and maybe some room for a justice center.

Eleven o'clock. The card game has ended. Someone won, someone lost. Little Ben is crying. Sand's nose continues to drip. Tara's joining in the crying, just for kicks. All is well.

--Joe Da Via

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p.s. from Dubuque ...stand for justice...

Looking back at the past five days which I spent as a guest and worker at the Des Moines Catholic Worker House, I feel a little tired, but much renewed. I had hoped to learn from my experience there and from talking to Frank and Joe in order to be more prepared for a venture in Dubuque. By May or June, Ann Bodnar and myself hope and pray to acquire a house and to offer hospitality to women and families in Dubuque.

There is much work to be done before then, and my stay in Des Moines is fast convincing me that "it can be done." We in Dubuque will have to trust that "with God all things are possible", as we are both in debt at the present. Voluntary poverty will not be much of a leap for us, I'm afraid.

I hope to hear from any interested persons who are willing to make some form of commitment to the Movement in Dubuque. It is essential to make a beginning, a small stand for justice in Dubuque. The poor there are generally "swept under the carpet" and there is great need of an opportunity for the middle class to share their wealth in a personal way and at a personal price. There are many in that fine Catholic city who may have found it easy to forget that "The poor we will always have with us..."

Yes, it has been a good week here. I was blessed with the



Rita Corbin

chance to meet another man whose name I don't remember (though I'm sure it's written in heaven) but who has come through some great struggles and offers a great deal in terms of Truth. He showed us what a calm spirit can do in the midst of some very chaotic moments.

In closing, let me say I am most grateful to Frank and Joe for all the help and support they are to me. Let me not forget to mention Margaret Quigley in Davenport who has encouraged our Dubuque effort, even from the time it was just a thought. Thanks Quig!

Pray for us. May the New Year make us burn so with the love of Christ, that we will not miss a single chance to serve Him in His least Brethren. See you in Dubuque!

Joanne Hall

January, 1977

What the Catholic Worker Believes

The Catholic Worker
stands for co-operation
against capitalism.

The Catholic Worker
stands for personalism
against socialism.

The Catholic Worker
stands for leadership
against dictatorship.

The Catholic Worker
stands for agrarianism
against industrialism.

The Catholic Worker
stands for decentralism
against totalitarianism.

The Catholic Worker believes
in the gentle personalism
of traditional Catholicism.

The Catholic Worker believes
in the personal obligation
of looking after
the needs of our brother.

The Catholic Worker believes
in the daily practice
of the works of mercy.

The Catholic Worker believes
in houses of hospitality
for the immediate relief
of those who are in need.

The Catholic Worker believes
in the establishment
of farming communes

where each one works
according to his ability
and gets according to his needs

The Catholic Worker believes
in creating a new society
within the shell of the old
with the philosophy of the new,
which is not a new philosophy
but a very old philosophy
a philosophy so old
that it looks like new.

--Peter Maurin

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